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Περίς, πηρίς and περίναιος

Περίς, πηρίς γ περίναιος

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This article discusses the etymology of Greek περίναιος (also περίναιον, περίνεος, περίνεον) ‘perineum’. The etymological dictionaries endorse Meister’s derivation from the medical term ἰνάω ‘evacuate, purge’, but this is unlikely to be correct. Instead, it appears to be a derivative of περίς ‘penis’, with possible contamination from πηρίς ‘scrotum’.

Key words: Greek etymology; Greek vocabulary; medical vocabulary; semantic contamination; semantic development; word-formation; word-families; etymology in antiquity; ghost-words.

En este artículo se discute la etimología de gr. περίναιος (con variantes περίναιον, περίνεος, περίνεον) ‘perineo’. Los diccionarios etimológicos aprueban la derivación de Meister del término médico ἰνάω ‘evacuar, purgar’, pero esta es poco convincente. En cambio se intenta demostrar que es un derivativo de περίς ‘pene’, quizá con contaminación semántica de πηρίς ‘escroto’.

Palabras clave: etimología griega; vocabulario griego; vocabulario médico; contaminación semántica; desarrollo semántico; formación de palabras; familias de palabras; la etimología en la antigüedad; palabras fantasmas.

The etymological dictionaries of Boisacq, Frisk, Chantraine and Beekes give near-identical explanations for περίναιος (also περίναιον, περίνεος, περίνεον) ‘perineum’¹: they endorse Meister’s derivation from περί ‘around’ and the medical term ἰνάω ‘evacuate, purge’², and mention the possibility of secondary contamination with πήρα ‘pouch’ and its derivative πηρίς or πηρίν ‘scrotum’³.

Although Meister’s article contains various untenable claims – it goes on to allege a connection with ἰνός ‘mule’ and ἱνίς ‘child’, and is described by Frisk as «im einzelnen abweichend und verfehlt»⁴ – his explanation for περίναιον seems plausible

¹ Boisacq 1950, p. 773, Frisk 1972, p. 513, Chantraine 2009, p. 855, Beekes 2010, p. 1177.

² Meister 1893, p. 141. More precisely, he takes περίναιον as a derivative of περίνεος (Hesych.), which would in turn be derived not from ἰνάω itself, but from its lost nominal base.

³ Also noted by Meister 1893, p. 140.

⁴ Frisk 1972.

enough at first sight. Like *ινάω* itself, *περίναιος* is a technical term, and a connection with *περί* (perhaps as ‘area around the evacuator or genitals’)⁵ seems semantically appealing⁶, especially given the parallel with *περιτόναιον* ‘peritoneum’, another technical word which is found in close proximity to *περίναιος* in medical texts. However, a new piece of evidence makes Meister’s theory unworkable.

The new evidence comes from Löffler’s suggestion for a difficult and characteristically obscene fragment of Hipponax about a man who eats fruit and then masturbates. The line in question, *fr.* 78.14, is given in the editions as *καὶ τῷ κιμαίῳ τόν[δε] ῥίνα φοινίξα[ς]*, with Adrados’ restoration of *τόνδε*. Since *ρίς* is feminine, the phrase was taken to mean «and staining this thing red at the tip with mulberry-juice», with *τόνδε* perhaps accompanied by a gesture to the crotch⁷. Löffler’s solution is to read *τὸν [π]ερῖνα φοινίξα[ς]*, with the accusative of a masculine noun *περίς* or *περίν*. He notes the Hesychian gloss *περίνα · περίναιον. τὸ αἰδοῖον. ἀφ’ οὗ καὶ τὸ περαίνεσθαι*, which can be corrected to *περίνα* and may well refer to this very line of Hipponax, which now makes perfect sense as ‘staining his penis/genitals with mulberry-juice’⁸.

This new addition to the Greek lexicon, *περίς* *περίνος* m. ‘penis’ or ‘genitals’, instantly casts doubt on Meister’s suggestion that *περίναιος* is built to *ινάω* or its lost nominal base. Greek *περίναιος* can now be taken as a straightforward derivative of *περίς*, perhaps via a feminine *περίνη* (if *περίναιος* really is the original form, and not just a hypercorrection of the more common *περίνεος*). No such form *περίνη* has been preserved⁹, but there are traces of a masculine *περίνος* or *περινός*¹⁰, and in any case the suffix *-αίος* does not always imply a feminine base-form¹¹. As a support for the connection with *περίς*, it is worth noting that *περίναιος* ~ *περίνεος* is used only

⁵ Beekes 2010 takes the semantics differently, as «empty region». However, this seems less likely, and could conceivably even be a mistranslation of Chantraine’s «la région par où le corps se vide».

⁶ Cf. the Suda’s definition of *ὄσχεος* as *ὁ περὶ τὰ αἰδοῖα τόπος*.

⁷ West 1974, p. 143. This putative real-world reference would have to be generic rather than specific, since the stainer of the poem is not the poet himself. We can compare E., *Cyc.* 169, Ar., *Au.* 442-443, but there is no need for the tentative suggestion of West 1974, p. 30, that Hipponax must have performed the poem wearing a comedy phallus.

⁸ Löffler 1999, p. 36, endorsed by Hawkins 2013, p. 99.

⁹ Meister 1893, pp. 140-141, posits a nom. sg. *περίνα* on the basis of *περίνα* in Hsch. and *πήρινα* in Gal. 19.130. However, these are better taken as accusatives *περίνα* and *πήρινα*.

¹⁰ Gal. 19.130 has *περινῶ · τῷ περινέῳ*, and there is the Hesychian gloss *περίνος · τὸ αἰδοῖον. οἱ δὲ τὸν καυλόν, ἢ τὸ διδύμων δέρμα, ἡγουν ὁ ταῦρος*, where the different translations support the idea that this was a genuine form.

¹¹ Buck and Petersen 1944, p. 45, mention *ὀδαῖος* (Hom.+), *δρομαῖος* (S.+), *εἰκαῖος* (S.+), and the process becomes more productive in later Greek.

very rarely of female anatomy, and usually seems to be understood as a purely male body-part¹². Furthermore, in Aristotle's *Generation of Animals* – one of the earliest attestations of the word – *περίνεος* appears to have a more general meaning 'male genitals'¹³, which would be yet more evidence against Meister's etymology and in favour of a derivation from *περίς*.

For *περίς* itself, the simplest analysis is that it represents a derivative of the root **per-* 'pierce', as found in *πείρω*, *περάω*, *περόνη* and *περαίνω*¹⁴. As the aforementioned Hesychian gloss for *περίνα* shows, the verb *περαίνω* is sometimes used of sexual penetration (hence the proverbial line from comedy, οὐδεις κομήτης ὅστις οὐ περαίνεται)¹⁵. However, rather than 'penetrator', it is more likely that *περίς* originally meant simply 'pointed object', with a secondary meaning 'penis' (which in this case apparently ousted the primary sense). At least, this is what we usually find in the numerous parallels such as Eng. *prick*, *yard*, Danish *pik*, Breton *kalc'h* and the like¹⁶.

We therefore have a new word *περίς*, complete with a plausible etymology. However, there is still the question of whether there was any contamination with *πήρα* and its derivative *πηρίς* 'scrotum'. To investigate this possibility, it is worth looking at the two word-families together.

πήρα, Ion. *πήρη*, allegedly also *πάρη* f. (Od.+) 'bag, pouch, purse'¹⁷.

πηρίς or *πηρίν* m. (Nic.) 'scrotum', but also glossed as 'penis', 'tip of the

¹² E.g. Gal. 4.158, 222, 19.130.

¹³ Arist. *GA* 716^a33, 766^a5. An additional meaning 'sperm ducts' is attested for the plural in Ps.-Zonar. *περιναῖον* φλεβάδες, πόροι. οἵτινες ἐπὶ μὲν τῶν ἐχόντων αἰδοῖον εἰς αὐτὸ τὸ αἰδοῖον ἐξάγουσι τὸ σπέρμα, ἐκ δὲ τούτων διαδεξάμενον τὸ αἰδοῖον ἀφίησιν εἰς τὸ θῆλυ. This is taken from the commentary of John Philoponus on Aristotle's *Generation of Animals* (*In libros de generatione animalium commentaria* 14.3.5.13), but is possibly just an attempt to reconcile the standard meaning of *περίνεος* with the divergent meaning in Aristotle (where the use of the plural *περίνεοι* in *GA* 716^a33 has no special significance, being merely the counterpart of ὑστέροι). As such, it may not represent a genuine additional sense.

¹⁴ The PIE root **per-* has a more general meaning 'cross, traverse', as seen in *πόρος*; the meaning 'pierce' is a secondary specialisation which is also found in Slavic (Rix et al. 2001, p. 472, cf. Pokorny 1959, p. 816).

¹⁵ Published by Kock as *Com. Adesp.* 14; this sense of *περαίνω* is also found in Artemidorus, Diogenes Laertius and the anonymous epigram *AP* 11.339.

¹⁶ Further examples are provided in Buck 1949, p. 258.

¹⁷ This common Greek word also forms a diminutive *πηρίδιον* (Ar.+) and various compounds: *πηρόδετος* 'attached to a pouch' (Anth., of a carrying strap), *πηροφόρος* 'carrying pouches' (Hesych., of miners), *πηρώνυμος* 'named after a pouch' (Tzetzes, of Paris), *αὐτο-πηρίτης* 'beggar, indigent' (Menippus Phil.), *ἄσκοπήρα* 'knapsack' (Ar. *fr.*, Diphilus Com.) and *σακκοπήρα* 'knapsack' (Apollodorus Com., Inscr.). The *EM* also cites the compounds *ἄπηρος*, *κακόπηρος*, *μονόπηρος*.

penis', 'testicle', 'genitals', 'perineum', 'anus'.¹⁸

περίς or περὶν m. (Hippon.) 'penis', but also glossed as 'perineum'.¹⁹

περίνος m. (Hesych., Hdn.) 'penis, scrotum'.²⁰

περινός m. or περινόν n. (dub. in Hp. *apud* Gal.) 'perineum'.²¹

περίναιος m., περίναιον n. (Med.) 'perineum'.

περίνεος m., περίνεον n. (Hp.+) 'perineum', apparently also 'male genitals' (Arist., *GA* 716^a33, 766^a5).

περίνιον n. (Meletius) 'perineum'.²²

περίναιοι or περιναῖοι m.pl. (Phlp., Ps.-Zonar.) 'sperm ducts'.²³

πειρήν m. (Tzetz., Psell.) 'penis', with secondary nom. περιῆνα (Ps.-Psell.),

πυρήνα (Sanguinatus).²⁴

πηρῖνος m. (Ps.-Zonar.) 'penis'.²⁵

The claim in Overduin 2015, p. 399, that περίς and πηρίς are variants of a single word seems to be incorrect, since in their actual attestations in Hipponax and

¹⁸ Vita-Scholium on Nic., *Th.* 586a: πηρίνα · ποτὲ μὲν τὸ ἀγγεῖον τῶν διδύμων, ποτὲ δὲ τὸ ἄκρον τῶν αἰδοίων, ἐξ ὧν αἱ προέσεις γίνονται; ibid. 586b: πηρίνα · τὸν ὄρχιν; Suda πηρίν, πηρίνος · τὸ αἰδοῖον; Gennadius Scholarius *Grammatica* 2.476.33: πηρίν πηρίνος, τὸ αἰδοῖον; Hesych. πηρίς · ὄσχη, κήλη, αἰδοῖον. καὶ ἱερείου ταυρία (for κήλη cf. Gal. 19.448.15: πᾶς γὰρ ὄγκος ἐν ὄσχεφ κήλη λέγεται). A different accentuation is found in Erot. 111: πηρινά (sic) · τὸν ὄσχεόν φησιν οὕτω καλεῖσθαι Αντίγονος ὁ γραμματικὸς παρὰ τὸ ὡς ἐν πήρᾳ εἶναι, and Gal. 19.130: πηρίνα · τὸν περίναιον, ἐν δὲ τῷ περὶ αἱμορροΐδων καὶ συρρίγγων καὶ τὴν ἔδραν λέγειν δοκεῖ. As already seen by Foes 1588, p. 504, both of these citations represent the accusative πηρίνα. However, πηρίνα was apparently later taken as a nom. sg. and confused with πειρήνα (v.l. πυρινά); cf. Daremberg 1854, p. 14, Trapp et al. 2007, p. 1253.

¹⁹ Hsch. περινα · περιναῖον. τὸ αἰδοῖον. ἀφ' οὗ καὶ τὸ περαίνεσθαι. As discussed above, we should probably read περινα.

²⁰ Hsch. περίνος · τὸ αἰδοῖον. οἱ δὲ τὸν καυλόν, ἢ τὸ διδύμων δέρμα, ἤγουν ὁ ταῦρος. Hdn. II 567.8: περίνος τὸ αἰδοῖον. A variant πέριλος or πέριλλος is also attested (Trapp et al. 2007, p. 1277, Daremberg 1854, p. 14), but in Sanguinatus *Poem. de corp. part.* 47 this refers to the female genitalia rather than the male.

²¹ Gal. 19.130: περινῶ · τῷ περινέφ, endorsed by Foes 1588, p. 497.

²² Melet., *De nat. hom.* 98.31 τὸ δὲ ὑποκάτω τῶν διδύμων περίνιον.

²³ As discussed above, this is possibly a ghost-sense invented to explain the use of περίνεος in Arist., *GA* 716^a33.

²⁴ Tz., *Schol. in Arist. Pl.* 648: περαίνειν δὲ καὶ τὸ συνουσιάζειν δηλοῖ. πειρήν γὰρ πολλὰ μὲν ἄλλα σημαίνει, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ αἰδοῖον. Psell., *Poemata* 6.463: τὸ δὲ ἀνδρῶν μόριον πειρήνᾳ που καλοῦσι (v.l. πυρινά, πίρινα). In the spurious 61.30 this is used as a nominative πειρήνα or ορινα, which is also found in Sanguinatus, *Poem. de corp. part.* 46 in the form πυρήνα.

²⁵ Ps.-Zonar. πηρίνος · τὸ αἰδοῖον.

Nicander their meanings are clearly different. However, there does seem to be some contamination at work. There are two possible signs of this: firstly, the apparent semantic crossing between the two word-families, and secondly, the fact that derivatives in -ίς -ῖνος are not particularly common, which makes the co-existence of *πηρίς* and *περίς* somewhat suspicious.

It is worth noting that the best evidence for semantic contamination comes from the glosses of the scholiasts, grammarians and lexicographers, and the Byzantine confusion of *περιῆνα* and *πηῖνα*. If we disregard these, the main piece of evidence is the fact that *περίναιος* seems to have been thought of as ‘the area by the scrotum’²⁶. This does not seem conclusive in itself, since *περίναιος* could just mean ‘the area by the genitals’. However, the similarity of *πηρίς* and *περίς*, together with the evidence from the glosses, suggests that contamination may well have been involved both in the formation of *πηρίς* and in the semantics of *περίνος* and *περίναιος*.

In all other respects, the morphology and derivational pattern of both word-families is entirely straightforward. The individual semantic developments involved are equally commonplace: for example, ‘pouch’ is cross-linguistically by far the most frequent etymological source for words for scrotum. Sometimes the word for scrotum is a derivative, as here for *πηρίς* from *πήρα*; in other cases the same word is simply reapplied, sometimes with a specification ‘pouch of the testes’. Further shifts in meaning from ‘scrotum’ to ‘testicle(s)’ or a more general ‘genitals’ are also common; an additional development to ‘penis’ is not unknown, but is considerably rarer²⁷.

The following parallels show how widespread these developments are. From Latin we have *scrōtum* itself, generally identified with *scrautum* ‘leather pouch for arrows’ and with some apparent connection to *scortum* ‘skin, hide’²⁸; this illustrates an additional pathway, leather > leather pouch > scrotum, which is also found in Welsh *cwd*. ‘Leather’ was also the original sense of ON *hreðjar* ‘scrotum’, which shows a further development to ‘testicle’ in Danish *rædde*. The development to ‘testicle’ reoccurs in German *Hode*, apparently cognate with Welsh *cwd*. Latin *bursa* ‘leather pouch’ (a loan from Greek βύρσα ‘leather’) provides a new word for scrotum in Romance languages, as seen in Port. *bolso* ‘coat pocket, scrotum’ alongside *bolsa* ‘bag’. The further development to ‘testicle’ is seen in Rom. *bos*, *boașe* ‘testicles’²⁹. Polish *moszna* and Slovene *mošnja* mean both ‘pouch’ and ‘scrotum’, but Russian has *mošna* ‘pouch’, *mošonka* ‘scrotum’, while in Serbian, ‘scrotum’ is

²⁶ E.g. Melet., *De nat.hom.* 98.31 τὸ δὲ ὑποκάτω τῶν διδύμων περίνιον; Gal. 19.130: περὶνῶ · τῷ περινέῳ. ἔστι δὲ ὁ τόπος ὁ μεταξὺ τοῦ ὀσχέου καὶ τῆς ἕδρας.

²⁷ The development to ‘penis’ is occasionally found for Eng. *cod* and French *couille*; cf. dial. Hungarian *mony* ‘egg, testicle, penis’.

²⁸ Adams 1982, pp. 74-75.

²⁹ Adams 1982, p. 76.

mošnice. Icelandic has *pungur* ‘pouch, scrotum’; Norwegian *kodd* shows the full range of meanings ‘pillow, scrotum, testicle’, while OSw. *kodde* and Dutch *kodde* have become specialised as ‘testicle’. Early modern English *cod* ‘purse, scrotum’ also shows this additional development, as seen in the plural *cods*, *coddes* ‘testicles’. The same development is found in English *cullions* (from French *couillons*) and Spanish *cojones* from Latin *cōleī* ‘testicles’, apparently related to *culleus* ‘leather sack’³⁰. Outside Indo-European, we have Finnish *kivespussi* ‘pouch of the testes’, but also the colloquial *pussit* ‘scrotum’ and *munapussit*, literally ‘egg-pouches’ (compare colloq. English *nut-sack*, *ball-bag*). Northern Saami *buddá* ‘scrotum, testicle’ is also from an original ‘pouch’; additional examples are Yurak Nenets *pāda* ‘pouch, scrotum’, and from the Kiranti languages of Nepal, Dumi *phoksi* ‘bag, scrotum’, Yamphu *cabra* ‘bag, scrotum’³¹.

To conclude our collection of parallels for the development pouch > scrotum, we can note that Greek itself shows the same development for other words for pouch. For ὄσχη (also ὄσχεος, ὄσχεον, ὄσχεα), the technical term for scrotum in medical literature, there is the Hesychian gloss ὄσχεα: βαλλάντια, μαρσύπια ἢ τὸ τῶν διδύμων ἀγγεῖον³², which suggests that the meaning ‘pouch’ was primary. The word βαλλάντιον ~ βαλλάντιον is also cited as a term for the scrotum in Theophilus Protospatharius: περιέχονται οὖν οἱ ὄρχεις ὑπὸ τινος δέρματος ἐοικότος θυλάκῳ τοῦτο βαλλάντιον ὀνομάζεται, ὑπὸ δὲ τῶν ἀνατομικῶν ἱατρῶν ὄσχεος³³. Also, in the *Hippiatrica* we find κώρυκος and θυλάκη as words for the scrotum of a horse³⁴. Finally, an anonymous reviewer kindly points me to an article by Méndez Dosuna, where it is suggested that Aristophanes and Euripides play on an alternative meaning ‘scrotum’ for both πῆρα and θύλακος³⁵.

As mentioned above, there are equally convincing parallels for the development from ‘pointed object’ to ‘penis’, which supports the analysis of περίς as a formation from the root of πείρω ‘pierce’ and περόνη ‘pin’, with the same suffix seen in γλωχίς ‘pointed end or blade, barb’. It is conceivable that the later derivative περίναιος ~ περίνεος ‘perineum’ developed directly from περίς by means of a semantic weak-

³⁰ The problem in the correspondence may be a sign that this is a loanword: de Vaan 2008, pp. 124, 150.

³¹ These last examples were gathered from the online databases at <http://www.starling.rinet.ru>.

³² Beekes 2010, p. 1122, charmingly translates this as «bags, purses or a sack of twins (sens. obsc.)». In fact, διδυμοί is a regular term for the testes in post-Classical Greek, as in Plu., *Alex.* 57.

³³ Theophilus Med., *De corporis humani fabrica* 5.28.20.

³⁴ *Hippiatr.* 73.1.

³⁵ Méndez Dosuna 2015, discussing πῆρα at Ar., *Pl.* 298, θυλάκιον at Ar., *Ra.* 1203 and θύλακος at Ar., *Ec.* 820, *V.* 1087, E., *Cyc.* 182.

ening ‘penis’ > ‘genitals’; in this case, the attestations of περίνεος, περίνεοι ‘male genitals’ in Aristotle’s *GA* would provide the crucial missing link. However, it seems equally likely that the meanings of περίς and its derivatives were widened as the result of semantic contamination with πηρίς ‘scrotum’. This is mirrored by the Byzantine attestations of πειρήν (most commonly found as πειρήνα), which also means ‘penis’³⁶ and is apparently also from the ‘pierce’ root (cf. πειρά ‘sword-point’), but is hopelessly confused with πηρίνα in the manuscripts³⁷.

The other base-word of these two word-families, πήρα ‘pouch’, still has no clear etymology. The eta appears to be from *ē rather than *ā, since the dialect form is ᾶ πήρα (if we can trust Theocritus, who is usually reliable in such matters). However, a supposed Ionic variant πάρη is mentioned twice by Eustathius, in his commentaries on the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. This is puzzling, since the variation of πήρα, πήρη, πάρη does not fit any regular patterns of dialect correspondences. The only obvious comparison is the variation in ἄθάρη, ἄθήρα ‘gruel’, which even has a variant ἄθήρα (Phot.) or ἄθήρη (Gal.). However, the parallel is not exact, since we find ἄθάρη even in Attic (leading Beekes to posit *at^harwā, with the same development as Att. δέρη, κόρη)³⁸. As for the later variant ἄθέρα or ἄθήρη, this is apparently merely the result of folk-etymological contamination with ἄθῆρ ἄθερος ‘chaff, awn’ and its thematised derivative ἄθερα (Arist. *fr. apud* Ath., *Physiologus*).

In fact, further investigation suggests that πάρη is probably a ghost-word. Both of its attestations in Eustathius refer to the grammarian Heraclides, who apparently explained δάκνω as the result of a characteristic Ionic shortening of eta to alpha also found in μεσαμβρία (*sic*), πάρη, λελακυῖα and μεμακυῖα³⁹. The other forms mentioned here are all genuine, even if they do not form a coherent group as Heraclides believed. However, it is significant that when the same statement is repeated, without the ascription to Heraclides, in the *Παρεκβολαὶ τοῦ μεγάλου ῥήματος* spuriously attributed to Herodian, the pair πήρη πάρη is replaced by Πῆρις Πάρις⁴⁰. This is presumably connected with the widespread ancient etymology explaining the name of

³⁶ A quotation from Numenius in Ath., VII 74.6 mentions a fish or sea-creature called πειρήν, used as bait. This may be unrelated, or could be named after a perceived resemblance: compare *pintle* or *pintle-fish* (a Scottish word for sand-eels and other species of similar appearance), *penis-fish* (*Urechis unicinctus*) and *piss-cock* (a fishermen’s name for sea-squirrels), all of which refer to small species used as bait.

³⁷ Thus, in Ps.-Zonar. we find πηρίνος · τὸ αἰδοῖον. The confusion led Daremberg 1854, p. 14, to emend πηρίνα in Sanguinatus to πηρίνα and translate it as ‘scrotum, perineum’. However, as recognised by Trapp et al. 2007, p. 1253, it is more likely to be the same word as πειρήνα, πηρίνα ‘penis’ in Psell. and Ps.-Psell.

³⁸ Beekes 2010, p. 28.

³⁹ Eust. *Comment. ad Il.* I 47.1, *Comment. ad Od.* II 14.4.

⁴⁰ Ps.-Herod., *Exc. Verb.* 23.34.

Paris from πήρα, supposedly from his being placed in a shepherd's pouch as a baby, when his parents attempted to get rid of him to foil the prophecy that he would bring ruin to Troy. The form Πῆρις, which is attested nowhere else, may have been created purely on the basis of this etymology.

It seems likely that the alleged Ionic πάρη was also an ad hoc creation to justify the etymology which connected Πάρις with πήρα, Ion. πήρη. This would explain why the author of the Παρεκβολαί apparently invented a form Πῆρις, since if he had known of a variant πάρη the etymology would not have required any further justification. It is worth noting that the connection of Paris and πήρη is a well-known etymology which is frequently mentioned in the ancient commentaries, whereas the evidence for πάρη and Πῆρις is restricted to the three passages mentioned above. It is also worth remembering that ancient etymologies were often made on the basis of very vague resemblances, so the discrepancy in vocalism between πήρα and Πάρις would not have been a stumbling-block. In other words, the etymology does not in itself support the idea that πάρη was genuine, and may even have been responsible for its invention.

The modern approach to etymology cannot help us to answer this question, since πήρα has no clear cognates apart from Latin *pērō* 'a crude kind of boot (supposedly made from rawhide)', which is generally taken to be a loan from Greek (or rather, a derivative of the Latin borrowing *pēra*), with a straightforward semantic shift from 'leather pouch' to 'crude leather boot'. Apart from this, there are apparently no good candidates for relatives outside Greek: the resemblance between πηρίς πηρίνος and Hitt. *paršinuš* 'genitals' is coincidental (the Hittite word's primary meanings seem to be 'cheeks, buttocks, hips'), and a connection between πήρα and Alb. *porrc* 'cow's stomach' seems even less likely⁴¹.

Since there is no apparent etymology, it is worth considering the suggestion that πήρα is a loanword, perhaps from a local substratum. The semantics of πήρα tie in rather well with this possibility, since from its first attestation in the Odyssey it refers to a beggar's pouch or shepherd's knapsack, which is not just a characteristic item of material culture (a field where borrowings are common), but one especially associated with rural life.

Furnée, who went even further than Beekes in his quest for substratum borrowings in Greek, not only identified πήρα as a classic example of a Pre-Greek word, but sought to connect it with βηρίδες, περιβᾶριδες, περιβᾶρα 'a kind of shoes worn by women'⁴². This would potentially bring Latin *pērō* back into the equation as a

⁴¹ Orel 1998, p. 339, derives this from *porr* 'oven', although it is worth noting that it is also suspiciously similar to the Romani word for stomach, *porr* ~ *perr*, which is related to Hindi *pet* 'stomach'.

⁴² Furnée 1972, pp. 151-152.

vital source of evidence, rather than a mere secondary loan from Greek. This is perhaps a step too far: not only is the phonological resemblance less compelling, but βηρίδες and περιβᾶριδες are often connected to βᾶρις ‘a kind of boat or raft’, which would take them further from the semantic field of our word-family. Thus, it is probably not worth pursuing this line of investigation. However, the idea that πήρα is a loanword makes good sense. Words for ‘pouch’ are very often borrowings, as is the case with Latin *bursa*, *pēra* and perhaps also *culleus*⁴³. Another good example is English *sack* (a true wanderwort, passing from Semitic into Greek σάκκος into Late Latin *saccus*). The picture is repeated within Greek itself: there are several words for pouches and sacks (e.g. ἄσκός, βαλλάντιον, γυλιός, θύλακος, κίβισις, κώρυκος, μάρσιππος ~ μάρσυππος, σάκκος, φάσκωλος, not to mention Hesychian glosses such as θαλλίς · μάρσιππος μακρός; θάλλικα · σάκκου εἶδος; μαλάνιον · σάκκος; σαγίς · πήρα; σύλαιον · θύλακον and the aforementioned ὄσχεα), but hardly any of them have a clear etymology, and there are often good reasons for thinking that they are borrowings. It seems likely that the same is true for πήρα.

This investigation of the Greek words for scrotum and perineum has confirmed that there are two separate word-families involved: one based on πήρα ‘pouch’, a word of unknown and possibly substratal origin, and another based on περίς ‘penis’, apparently from the Indo-European root *per-. The medical term περίναιος / περίναιον appears to be a derivative of this noun περίς, with possible semantic contamination from πηρίς. This provides a much better explanation for the Greek word for perineum than the confused suggestions of Meister, which are given undue prominence in the existing etymological dictionaries.

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⁴³ De Vaan 2008, p. 150.

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